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accordance with the procedures listed in § 273.3.

(b) The Service may, at any time, conduct an inspection of a carrier's document screening procedures at ports of embarkation to determine compliance with the procedures listed in § 273.3, to the extent permitted by the local competent authority responsible for port access or security. If necessary, the carrier shall use its good offices to obtain this permission from the local authority. If the carrier's port of embarkation operation is found not to be in compliance, the carrier will be notified by the Service that it will not be eligible for refund, reduction, or waiver of fines under section 273(e) of the Act unless the carrier can establish that lack of compliance was beyond the carrier's control.

§ 273.5 General criteria used for reduction, refund, or waiver of fines.

(a) Upon application by the carrier, the Service shall determine whether circumstances exist which would justify a reduction, refund, or waiver of fines pursuant to section 273(e) of the Act.

(b) Applications for reduction, refund, or waiver of fine under section 273(e) of the Act shall be made in accordance with the procedures outlined in 8 CFR 280.12 and 8 CFR 280.51.

(c) In determining the amount of the fine reduction, refund, or waiver, the Service shall consider:

- (1) The effectiveness of the carrier's screening procedures;
- (2) The carrier's history of fines violations, including fines, liquidated damages, and user fee payment records; and,
- (3) The existence of any extenuating circumstances.

§ 273.6 Memorandum of Understanding.

(a) Carriers may apply to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Service for an automatic reduction, refund, or waiver of fines imposed under section 273 of the Act.

(b) Carriers signatory to an MOU will not be required to apply for reduction, refund, or waiver of fines in accordance with the procedures outlined in 8 CFR

280.12 and 8 CFR 280.51, but will follow procedures as set forth in the MOU.

(c) Carriers signatory to an MOU will have fines reduced, refunded, or waived according to performance standards enumerated in the MOU or as determined by the Service.

(d) Carriers signatory to an MOU are not precluded from seeking additional reduction, refund, or waiver of fines in accordance with the procedures outlined in 8 CFR 280.12 and 8 CFR 280.51.

PART 274—SEIZURE AND FORFEITURE OF CONVEYANCES

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AUTHORITY: 8 U.S.C. 1103, 1324(b).

SOURCE: 53 FR 43187, Oct. 26, 1988, unless otherwise noted.

§ 274.1 Definitions.

The following definitions apply to the following terms in this part:

(a) The term *appraised value* means the estimated price at the time and place of seizure, if such or similar property were freely offered for sale.

(b) The term *beneficial owner* means a person who has dominion and control

over a conveyance, as well as a property interest therein.

(c) The term *claimant* means any person who asserts a property interest in a seized or forfeited conveyance through a personal interview or by filing a claim and a bond or a petition for relief from forfeiture.

(d) The term *common carrier* means an express carrier, a freight forwarder, a motor common carrier, a rail carrier, a sleeping car carrier, and a water common carrier, as each of those terms is defined in 49 U.S.C. 10102; and an air carrier and a foreign air carrier, as each of those terms is defined in 49 U.S.C. 1301.

(e) The term *consenting party or privy to the illegal act* means that the person knew of the illegal activity. A person shall be presumed to have knowledge of an illegal activity if the facts and circumstances are such that a person would reasonably be expected to know of the illegal activity.

(f) The term *conveyance* means a vessel, vehicle, or aircraft as used in section 274(b) of the Act. A trailer shall be considered a vehicle if it is being towed or readily capable of being towed. An immobilized house trailer which has been placed on permanent foundations, which is not readily mobile, is not a vehicle.

(g) The term *custodian* means the regional commissioner or the U.S. Marshals Service.

(h) The date of an action in conjunction with the term *filed* means the following:

(1) Date of receipt in the office specified in this part for filing, if filing is by personal delivery;

(2) Date of postmark, if filing is by mail to the office specified in this part for filing;

(3) Date five days prior to date of receipt in the office specified in this part for filing, if filing is by mail to the office specified in this part for filing and date of postmark is missing or illegible; or

(4) Date of receipt in the office specified in this part for filing, if filing is by mail to any other office.

(i) The term *lien* means an interest created by a conditional sales contract, mortgage, title retention contract, debt reduced to a judicial judgment

upon which there has been an execution or an attachment against a conveyance, or other security interest in a conveyance. A lienholder is the holder of such an interest.

(j) The term *net equity* means the amount of monetary interest of a lienholder in a conveyance. Net equity is to be computed by determining the amount of unpaid principal and unpaid interest as of the date of seizure, and by adding to that amount the unpaid interest calculated from the date of seizure through the last full month prior to the date of the determination granting relief from forfeiture. The rate of interest to be used in this computation will be the annual percentage rate specified in the security agreement which is the basis of the interest of the lienholder. In this computation there shall be no allowances for unearned extended warranty, insurance, or service contract charges incurred after the date of seizure, nor allowances for dealer reserves, attorneys fees, or other similar charges.

(k) The term *owner* means a person who has the right to possess and use a conveyance to the exclusion of other persons. A person who has complied with the state formalities for a title or a registration for a conveyance is not the owner if such person does not have sufficient actual beneficial interest in the conveyance. In the consideration of a petition for relief from forfeiture the mere existence of a community property interest without proof of financial contribution to the purchase of a conveyance will not be deemed a property interest. Ownership is the interest that an owner has in a conveyance.

(l) The term *person* means an individual, partnership, corporation, joint business enterprise, or other entity capable of owning a conveyance.

(m) The term *petitioner* means a person filing a petition for relief from forfeiture of a seized conveyance.

(n) The term *property interest* means ownership, lien, or other legally cognizable interest in or legal entitlement to possession of a conveyance existing on the date of seizure of the conveyance. A person who has complied with the state formalities of a title or a registration for a conveyance may not

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have sufficient actual beneficial interest or other legally cognizable interest in a conveyance. In the consideration of a petition for relief from forfeiture the mere existence of a community property interest without proof of financial contribution to the purchase of a conveyance will not be deemed a property interest.

(o) The term *record* means an arrest for a related crime followed by a conviction, except that a single arrest and conviction and the expiration of any sentence imposed as a result of the conviction, all of which occurred more than ten years prior to the date a claimant acquired a property interest in the seized or forfeited conveyance, is not considered a record; *provided* that two convictions of related crimes shall always be considered a record regardless of when the convictions occurred; *and provided* that the regional commissioner may consider as constituting a record an arrest for a related crime or series of arrests for related crimes in which the charge or charges were subsequently dismissed for reasons other than acquittal or lack of evidence.

(p) The term *regional commissioner* means the Regional Commissioner of the Service for the region in which a conveyance is seized, or the designee of that Regional Commissioner.

(q) The term *related crime* means any crime similar in nature to or related to the illegal bringing in, harboring, transportation, entry, reentry, or importation of aliens.

(r) The term *reputation* means repute for related crimes with a law enforcement agency or among law enforcement officers or in the community generally, including any pertinent neighborhood or other area.

(s) The term *seizure* means the act of taking a conveyance into the custody of the Service for the express purpose of considering forfeiture pursuant to section 274(b) of the Act and this part.

(t) The term *state* means any state or any like political division of any geographical territory defined in section 101(a)(38) of the Act as being part of the United States or any state or any like political division of any geographical territory of any other nation or territory, unless otherwise limited in this part.

(u) The term *sufficient actual beneficial interest* means the interest in a conveyance of a beneficial owner.

(v) The term *violation* means a person whose use of or actions with regard to a conveyance in violation of the law subjected the conveyance to seizure pursuant to section 274(b) of the Act and this part.

§ 274.2 Officers authorized to seize conveyances.

For the purpose of carrying out the provisions of section 274(b) of the Act and this part, any immigration officer is authorized and designated by the Commissioner to seize a conveyance.

§ 274.3 Custody and duties of custodian.

Any conveyance seized pursuant to section 274(b) of the Act and this part shall be stored in a location designated by the custodian. The custodian is to receive and maintain in storage all conveyances seized and all conveyances forfeited pursuant to section 274(b) of the Act and this part. After the custodian is notified that all proceedings, administrative or judicial, have been completed and that all petitions for relief from forfeiture have been finally adjudicated, a conveyance is available for disposition according to law. The custodian is authorized to dispose of any conveyances pursuant to section 274(b) of the Act and any other applicable statutes or regulations relative to disposal; and to perform other duties, not inconsistent with the provisions of the Act, regarding seized and forfeited conveyances and the proceeds of sales thereof, as are imposed on the U.S. Customs Service with respect to seizures under the Customs statutes, including the maintenance of appropriate records concerning the seizure and disposition of conveyances.

§ 274.4 Conveyances subject to seizure; termination of interest.

(a) Any conveyance which an immigration officer has probable cause to believe has been or is being used in the commission of a violation of section 274(a) of the Act is subject to seizure.

(b) Any property interest in a conveyance is automatically terminated

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as of the date of the seizure, if the conveyance is later declared forfeited. Any provision of any state law which recognizes a continuing property interest or right to reinstatement of a property interest in a conveyance has no effect after the date of the seizure of the conveyance, if the conveyance is later declared forfeited.

(c) The custodian is authorized to execute a document of title to convey ownership of a conveyance declared forfeited pursuant to section 274(b) of the Act and this part.

§ 274.5 Return to owner of seized conveyance not subject to forfeiture; opportunity for personal interview.

(a) The Service shall attempt with due diligence to ascertain the ownership of any conveyance seized pursuant to section 274(b) of the Act and this part, in order to determine whether the conveyance is subject to forfeiture.

(b) The following conveyances are not subject to forfeiture:

(1) A conveyance used by any person as a common carrier, unless it appears that the owner or other person in charge was a consenting party or privy to the illegal use of the conveyance; and

(2) A conveyance established by the owner to have been unlawfully in the possession of a person other than the owner in violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any state of the United States as defined in section 101(a)(38) of the Act.

(c) The owner of a seized conveyance shall be informed of the right to request a personal interview with an immigration officer and to present evidence to establish:

(1) That the conveyance was not subject to seizure; or

(2) That the conveyance is not subject to forfeiture; or

(3) That the conveyance was used in an act to which the owner was not privy, or did not consent, and the owner took all reasonable steps to prevent the illegal use of the conveyance.

If it is determined that the owner has established that paragraphs (c)(1) or (c)(2) of this section apply to the seized conveyance, that seized conveyance shall be returned to the owner as provided in paragraph (e) of this section;

and if it is determined that the owner has established that paragraph (c)(3) of this section applies to the seized conveyance, that seized conveyance may be returned to the owner as provided in paragraph (d) of this section.

(d) At any time after seizure the regional commissioner may determine that it is in the best interests of justice not to pursue forfeiture of a seized conveyance which is otherwise subject to forfeiture. If such a determination is made, that seized conveyance shall be returned to the owner as provided in paragraph (e) of this section.

(e) The owner of a seized conveyance to be returned pursuant to paragraphs (c) or (d) of this section will be notified of the conditions of obtaining possession and that possession of the seized conveyance must be taken within 20 days of receipt of notice of the availability of the seized conveyance for return. If the owner has not complied with the conditions of obtaining possession and taken possession of the seized conveyance within that 20 day period, that seized conveyance shall be considered voluntarily abandoned to the United States, and the custodian shall dispose of that seized conveyance as provided in § 274.3 of this part. The conditions of obtaining possession of a seized conveyance available for return pursuant to paragraphs (c) and (d) of this section are as follows:

(1) If paragraph (c)(1) of this section applies to the seized conveyance, there shall be no conditions for obtaining possession;

(2) If paragraphs (c)(2), (c)(3), or (d) of this section apply to the seized conveyance, the owner shall pay all costs and expenses of seizure and shall execute an instrument holding the United States, its agents and employees, harmless from all claims which may result from the seizure and return of the seized conveyance.

(f) If a seized conveyance being returned to the owner pursuant to this section is the subject of judicial forfeiture proceedings, the regional commissioner shall notify the United States Attorney that a determination has been made that the seized conveyance is to be returned to the owner and request that the judicial forfeiture proceedings be terminated.

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§ 274.6 Proof of property interest.

The burden of proof is on a claimant to establish that the asserted property interest in a seized conveyance existed on the date of seizure of that conveyance by submission of sufficient satisfactory original documentation or certified copies of the original documentation. If the claimant fails to present documentation showing compliance with required state formalities it will be presumed that a property interest in a seized conveyance did not exist on the date of seizure of that conveyance.

§ 274.7 Appraisal.

The regional commissioner shall determine the appraised value of a seized conveyance by consulting accepted reference guides to conveyance values or experts in conveyance values. If there is no market for a conveyance at the place of seizure, the value of the conveyance in the principal market nearest the place of seizure shall be considered.

§ 274.8 Notice to owner and lienholder of seizure.

Whenever a conveyance is seized, a notice must be given to the owner and any known lienholder notifying them of the seizure of the conveyance and its consideration for forfeiture. The notice must be accompanied by copies of this part, section 274 of the Act, and the proposed advertisement, if an advertisement is required pursuant to § 274.9 of this part. The owner shall be specifically informed of the provisions of §§ 274.5, 274.10, 274.13, 274.14, 274.15, 274.16, and 274.17 of this part.

§ 274.9 Advertisement.

(a) If the appraised value of a seized conveyance does not exceed the monetary amount set forth in title 19 U.S.C. 1607 the regional commissioner shall cause an advertisement of the seizure to be published once a week for at least three successive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the federal judicial district in which the seizure occurred.

(b) The advertisement must:

(1) Describe the conveyance seized and indicate the identification number, if any;

(2) State the time and place of seizure;

(3) State that the seized conveyance is subject to forfeiture except as provided in § 274.5(b) of this part;

(4) State that the Service is considering forfeiture of the seized conveyance and sale or other disposal, if declared forfeited; and

(5) State that any prospective petitioners for relief from forfeiture should submit their petitions pursuant to §§ 274.13, 274.14, 274.15, 274.16, and 274.17 of this part within 30 days of publication of the advertisement.

[53 FR 43187, Oct. 26, 1988, as amended at 56 FR 8686, Mar. 1, 1991]

§ 274.10 Judicial forfeiture proceedings upon claim and bond.

(a) Any person claiming ownership of a seized conveyance with an appraised value that does not exceed the monetary amount set forth in title 19 U.S.C. 1607, may obtain judicial forfeiture proceedings in United States District Court by filing a claim and a bond as follows:

(1) The claim must set forth the basis of the claimed ownership and allege why the conveyance was not subject to seizure;

(2) The claim must be filed in the office specified in the notice and the advertisement as provided in § 274.8 and § 274.9 of this part within 20 days of the date of first publication of the advertisement;

(3) The claim must be accompanied by a bond in the amount of the lesser of \$5,000 or ten percent of the appraised value of the seized conveyance, but in no event less than \$250, in the form of cash or certified check; and

(4) If the bond is in the form of a check, it must be drawn payable to the Department of Justice. The costs and expenses of the judicial forfeiture proceedings will be paid from the bond, following completion of the proceedings. Any balance remaining shall be returned to the claimant.

(b) The regional commissioner may waive the bond requirement in the manner provided in § 103.7(c)(1) of this chapter.

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(c) The filing of a claim and a bond does not entitle the claimant to possession of the conveyance.

[53 FR 43187, Oct. 26, 1988, as amended at 56 FR 8686, Mar. 1, 1991]

§ 274.11 Administrative forfeiture.

If the appraised value of a seized conveyance does not exceed the monetary amount set forth in title 19 U.S.C. 1607, and a claim and a bond are not filed within 20 days of the date of first publication of the advertisement as provided in § 274.9 of this part, the regional commissioner may declare the seized conveyance forfeited. The regional commissioner shall execute the declaration of forfeiture. The custodian shall dispose of the forfeited conveyance as provided in § 274.3 of this part.

[53 FR 43187, Oct. 26, 1988, as amended at 56 FR 8686, Mar. 1, 1991]

§ 274.12 Judicial forfeiture.

If the appraised value of a seized conveyance exceeds the monetary amount set forth in title 19 U.S.C. 1607, or a claim and a bond have been filed for a seized conveyance with an appraised value that does not exceed the monetary amount set forth in title 19 U.S.C. 1607, as provided in § 274.10(a) of this part, the regional commissioner shall transmit the claim and bond, as well as a copy of the advertisement as provided in § 274.9 of this part and a complete statement of the facts and circumstances surrounding the seizure to the United States Attorney for the federal judicial district in which the conveyance was seized for commencement of judicial forfeiture proceedings pursuant to section 274(b) of the Act and this part.

[53 FR 43187, Oct. 26, 1988, as amended at 56 FR 8686, Mar. 1, 1991]

§ 274.13 Petitions for relief from forfeiture; filing.

(a) Any person having a property interest in any seized conveyance may file a petition for relief from forfeiture. A petition must comply with the provisions of this section and §§ 274.14, 274.15, 274.16, and 274.17 of this part and be filed with the regional commissioner if the seized conveyance has not been referred to a United States Attorney pur-

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suant to § 274.12 of this part for the commencement of judicial forfeiture proceedings. If such a referral has occurred, a petition must comply with the provisions of 28 CFR 9.3 and be filed with the United States Attorney.

(b) A petition must be executed and sworn to by the petitioner or by duly authorized counsel for the petitioner upon information and belief.

(c) A petition must include the following:

(1) A complete description of the conveyance, including identification number, if any, and the date and place of seizure;

(2) A complete statement of the property interest in the seized conveyance asserted by the petitioner, which property interest must be established as provided in § 274.6 of this part; and

(3) The facts and circumstances, with satisfactory proof thereof, relied upon by the petitioner to justify relief from forfeiture.

(d) Filing of a petition does not extend the time for filing a claim and a bond.

(e) If a petition is received by or a petition without a determination issued thereon is in the possession of the regional commissioner which asserts a property interest in a seized conveyance which is the subject of a referral to a United States Attorney for commencement of judicial forfeiture proceedings, the regional commissioner shall transmit the petition and a recommendation thereon to the United States Attorney. The regional commissioner shall notify the petitioner of the transmittal. Upon receipt of such a petition, the United States Attorney shall forward a copy of the petition, the recommendation of the regional commissioner, and the recommendation of the United States Attorney to the Director, Asset Forfeiture Office, Criminal Division, Department of Justice.

§ 274.14 Time for filing petitions.

(a) Petitions for the reliefs of remission or mitigation of forfeiture should be filed within 30 days of the date of first publication of the advertisement as provided in § 274.9 of this part. After a seized conveyance has been declared forfeited and placed in official use,

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sold, or otherwise disposed of according to law, petitions for the reliefs of remission or mitigation of forfeiture shall not be accepted.

(b) Petitions for the relief of restoration of proceeds of sale or the appraised value of a seized and forfeited conveyance placed in official use or otherwise disposed of according to law must be filed within 90 days of the sale of the seized and forfeited conveyance or within 90 days that the seized and forfeited conveyance is placed in official use or otherwise disposed of according to law.

§ 274.15 Remission.

(a) The regional commissioner shall not grant remission of forfeiture unless the petitioner establishes:

(1) A property interest in the conveyance;

(2) That at no time did the petitioner have any knowledge or reason to believe that the conveyance was being or would be used in violation of the law, including satisfying any applicable provisions of § 274.18 of this part;

(3) That the petitioner had no knowledge of the particular violation which subjected the conveyance to seizure and forfeiture;

(4) That the petitioner had no knowledge that the owner nor anyone else using or able to use the conveyance had any record or reputation; had

(5) That the petitioner had taken all reasonable steps to prevent the illegal use of the conveyance.

(b) Remission of forfeiture can only be granted after a seized conveyance has been declared forfeited.

(c) Grant of remission of forfeiture must be conditioned upon:

(1) Payment to the custodian of all costs and expenses of the seizure and forfeiture; or, in the case of a lienholder-petitioner, payment of all costs and expenses of the seizure and forfeiture or the amount by which the appraised value exceeds the net equity of the lienholder-petitioner in the conveyance, whichever is greater;

(2) Execution of an instrument by the petitioner holding the United States, its agents and employees, harmless from all claims which may result from the grant of remission of forfeiture;

(3) Execution of an agreement by the petitioner that no property interest in the conveyance will be transferred to any violator; and

(4) Any other terms or conditions as the regional commissioner determines to be appropriate, including a provision for liquidated damages to guarantee compliance with any of the provisions of the agreement or terms and conditions of the remission of forfeiture.

(d) The following provisions apply only to an owner-petitioner that is granted remission of forfeiture:

(1) Within 20 days after receipt of the determination, that owner-petitioner shall comply with the conditions of remission and take possession of the forfeited conveyance; and

(2) If that owner-petitioner does not comply with the provisions of paragraph (d)(1) of this section, the forfeited conveyance shall be placed in official use, sold, or otherwise disposed of by the custodian as provided in § 274.3 of this part. The proceeds of a sale of the forfeited conveyance shall be applied first to all costs and expenses of the seizure, forfeiture, and sale and any remaining balance shall be paid to that owner-petitioner. If the forfeited conveyance is placed in official use or otherwise disposed of, that owner-petitioner shall be paid an amount equal to the appraised value of the conveyance minus all costs and expenses of the seizure, forfeiture, and disposal.

(e) The following provisions apply only to a lienholder-petitioner that is granted remission of forfeiture:

(1) That lienholder-petitioner shall receive payment of the net equity of that lienholder-petitioner, if the forfeited conveyance is placed in official use or otherwise disposed of according to law; or either possession of the forfeited conveyance, or a monetary amount not to exceed the net equity of that lienholder-petitioner from a sale of the forfeited conveyance;

(2) Within 20 days after receipt of the determination, that lienholder-petitioner shall comply with the conditions of remission and take possession of the forfeited conveyance; and

(3) If that lienholder-petitioner does not comply with the provisions of paragraph (e)(2) of this section, the forfeited conveyance shall be placed in official use, sold, or otherwise disposed of by the custodian as provided in § 274.3 of this part. The proceeds of a sale shall be applied first to all costs and expenses of the seizure, forfeiture, and sale and any remaining balance not exceeding the net equity of that lienholder-petitioner shall be paid to that lienholder-petitioner. If the forfeited conveyance is placed in official use or otherwise disposed of, that lienholder-petitioner shall be paid the net equity of that lienholder-petitioner minus all costs and expenses of the seizure, forfeiture, and disposal.

§ 274.16 Mitigation.

(a) The regional commissioner may grant mitigation of forfeiture of a seized conveyance to a petitioner, including a violator. To be eligible for the relief of mitigation of forfeiture, a petitioner must establish that transfer of ownership of the forfeited conveyance to the petitioner promotes the interests of justice and does not diminish the deterrent effect of section 274(b) of the Act.

(b) A grant of mitigation of forfeiture shall be in the form of a monetary penalty imposed upon the petitioner in addition to any other amounts chargeable as a condition to the grant of the relief of remission of forfeiture. This penalty is considered as an item of cost payable by the petitioner.

(c) Mitigation of forfeiture can only be granted after a seized conveyance has been declared forfeited.

(d) A grant of mitigation of forfeiture must be conditioned upon:

(1) Execution of an instrument by the petitioner holding the United States, its agents and employees, harmless from all claims which may result from the grant of mitigation of forfeiture;

(2) Execution of an agreement that no property interest in the conveyance will be transferred to any violator, or any other violator if the petitioner is a violator; and

(3) Any other terms or conditions as the regional commissioner determines to be appropriate, including a provision for liquidated damages to guarantee

compliance with any provisions of the agreement or terms and conditions of the mitigation of forfeiture.

(e) The following provisions apply only to an owner-petitioner that is granted mitigation of forfeiture:

(1) Within 20 days after receipt of the determination, that owner-petitioner shall comply with the conditions of mitigation and take possession of the forfeited conveyance; and

(2) If that owner-petitioner does not comply with the provisions of paragraph (e)(1) of this section, the forfeited conveyance shall be placed in official use, sold, or otherwise disposed of by the custodian under § 274.3 of this part. The proceeds of a sale of the forfeited conveyance shall be applied first to all costs and expenses of the seizure, forfeiture, and sale and any remaining balance shall be paid to that owner-petitioner. If the forfeited conveyance is placed in official use or otherwise disposed of, that owner-petitioner shall be paid an amount equal to the appraised value of the conveyance minus all costs and expenses of the seizure, forfeiture, and disposal.

(f) The following provisions apply only to a lienholder-petitioner that is granted mitigation of forfeiture:

(1) That lienholder-petitioner shall receive payment of the net equity of that lienholder-petitioner, if the forfeited conveyance is retained for official use; or either possession of the forfeited conveyance, or a monetary amount not to exceed the net equity of that lienholder-petitioner from the sale of the forfeited conveyance;

(2) Within 20 days after receipt of the determination, that lienholder-petitioner shall comply with the conditions of mitigation and take possession of the forfeited conveyance; and

(3) If the lienholder-petitioner does not comply with the provisions of paragraph (f)(2) of this section, the forfeited conveyance shall be placed in official use, sold, or otherwise disposed of by the custodian as provided in § 274.3 of this part. The proceeds of a sale shall be applied first to all costs and expenses of the seizure, forfeiture, and sale and any remaining balance not exceeding the net equity of that lienholder-petitioner shall be paid to

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that lienholder-petitioner. If the forfeited conveyance is placed in official use or otherwise disposed of, that lienholder-petitioner shall be paid the net equity of that lienholder-petitioner minus all costs and expenses of the seizure, forfeiture, and disposal.

§ 274.17 Restoration of proceeds or appraised value.

(a) The regional commissioner shall not grant restoration of proceeds of sale or the appraised value of a conveyance placed in official use or otherwise disposed of according to law unless the petitioner establishes that the petitioner:

(1) Did not know of the seizure prior to the declaration of forfeiture;

(2) Was in such circumstances as prevented the petitioner from knowing thereof; and

(3) Would otherwise have been granted the relief of remission of forfeiture.

(b) A grant of restoration of proceeds of sale or the appraised value of a conveyance placed in official use or otherwise disposed of according to law must be conditioned upon:

(1) Execution of an instrument by the petitioner holding the United States, its agents and employees, harmless from all claims which may result from the grant of restoration of proceeds of sale or the appraised value of a conveyance placed in official use or otherwise disposed of according to law; and

(2) Any other terms or conditions as the regional commissioner determines to be appropriate.

§ 274.18 Provisions applicable to particular situations.

(a) A straw purchaser is a person who purchases in his own name a conveyance for another person, the real purchaser, who has a record or reputation. A lienholder-petitioner that knows, or has reason to believe, that a purchaser of a conveyance is a straw purchaser, must satisfy the requirements of § 274.15(a) of this part as to both the straw purchaser and the real purchaser to be eligible for a grant of remission of forfeiture. This provision applies where money is borrowed on the security of property held in the name of the straw purchaser for the real purchaser.

(b) A petitioner engaged in the business of leasing conveyances must satisfy the requirements of § 274.15(a) of this part as to all lessees and sublessees or other persons having any interest under a lease of the subject conveyance on the date of seizure of that conveyance to be eligible for a grant of remission of forfeiture.

(c) In the consideration of a petition for relief from forfeiture the mere existence of a community property interest without proof of financial contribution to the purchase of a conveyance will not be deemed to have been a property interest in a seized and forfeited conveyance.

(d) A petitioner that submits a petition for remission of forfeiture as a subrogee must satisfy the requirements of § 274.15(a) of this part as to all prior possessors of the subrogated interest in the seized and forfeited conveyance to be eligible for a grant of remission of forfeiture.

§ 274.19 Determinations on petitions; reconsideration.

(a) Upon consideration of a petition for relief from forfeiture and all of the facts and circumstances surrounding the seizure of a conveyance, the regional commissioner shall issue a written determination. In making that determination the regional commissioner shall presume that the evidence is sufficient to support forfeiture of the conveyance. No hearing shall be held on any petitions for relief from forfeiture under this part.

(b) The regional commissioner may deny relief from forfeiture when there are unusual circumstances regarding a seizure which provide reasonable grounds for concluding that remission or mitigation of the forfeiture would be contrary to the interests of justice and would diminish the deterrent effect of section 274(b) of the Act, even if the petitioner has satisfactorily established compliance with the administrative conditions applicable to and eligibility for relief from forfeiture.

(c) Relief from forfeiture shall not be granted to any petitioner who has a subordinate property interest to another petitioner until the petition of

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the petitioner with the superior property interest has been finally adjudicated nor until any claim or petition of the owner has been finally adjudicated.

(d) The determination on a petition shall set forth either the conditions upon which relief has been granted and the procedures for obtaining possession of the forfeited conveyance or other relief granted; or the reasons for denial of relief from forfeiture and the procedures for requesting reconsideration. The determination on a petition shall be mailed to the petitioner or duly authorized counsel of the petitioner.

(e) Any request for reconsideration of a denial of relief from forfeiture must be submitted to the regional commissioner within 10 days of receipt of the determination on the petition. Such request for reconsideration can only be based on evidence recently developed or not previously considered.

(f) Only one request for reconsideration of a denial of relief from forfeiture shall be considered.

§ 274.20 Compromise of judicial forfeiture proceedings.

Judicial forfeiture proceedings commenced pursuant to section 274(b) of the Act and this part may be compromised by the United States Attorney only with the concurrence of the Director, Asset Forfeiture Office, Criminal Division, Department of Justice. In evaluating a compromise, the United States Attorney shall consider the probabilities for successfully prosecuting the judicial forfeiture proceedings and the terms of the compromise offer. The United States Attorney shall consult with the regional commissioner before recommending a compromise.

PART 274a—CONTROL OF EMPLOYMENT OF ALIENS

Subpart A—Employer Requirements

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AUTHORITY: 8 U.S.C. 1101, 1103, 1324a; 8 CFR part 2.

SOURCE: 52 FR 16221, May 1, 1987, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—Employer Requirements

§ 274a.1 Definitions.

For the purpose of this part—

(a) The term *unauthorized alien* means, with respect to employment of an alien at a particular time, that the alien is not at that time either: (1) Lawfully admitted for permanent residence, or (2) authorized to be so employed by this Act or by the Attorney General;

(b) The term *entity* means any legal entity, including but not limited to, a corporation, partnership, joint venture, governmental body, agency, proprietorship, or association;

(c) The term *hire* means the actual commencement of employment of an employee for wages or other remuneration. For purposes of section 274A(a)(4) of the Act and § 274a.5 of this part, a hire occurs when a person or entity uses a contract, subcontract or exchange entered into, renegotiated or extended after November 6, 1986, to obtain the labor of an alien in the United States, knowing that the alien is an unauthorized alien;

(d) The term *refer for a fee* means the act of sending or directing a person or transmitting documentation or information to another, directly or indirectly, with the intent of obtaining employment in the United States for such person, for remuneration whether on a retainer or contingency basis; however, this term does not include union hiring